

changed circumstances as people are facing a lot of difficulties. People have submitted numerous representations. But still you have not taken any decision. Please let us know your programme in this regard.

[English]

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : The information furnished by the hon. Member is not correct.

In December, 1996 a decision was taken to import 1.4 MT from Australia. The hon. Member will be happy to know that about 67 have been finalised. They have been taken over by the Indian vessels. So, there is a saving of Rs. 20 million on account of freight. This system is working quite all right. So, there need not be any review or change of this system.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a specific question to the hon. Minister. The hon. Minister, in his reply, has stated :

"The Ministry will ensure disposal of such requests within four workings days on receipt of the complete information/request from the concerned Ministry/PSU."

If that is so, I want to know whether any format has been prepared. What do you mean by "all information"? It means, they have to send all the information immediately. Then, a letter will go. After four days or ten days or even one month, you will ask for some other information. Therefore, I want to know whether any format is there so that while applying they can fully fill up that format and then the Government can take a decision.

Those vessels are chartered vessels. They are other than the flag ships. I want to know whether the Government has made any comparative study by which they can indicate the number of Indian flag ships used, to what extent they were used, and when they were used. Which were the flag ships used during that period?

SHTI T.G. VENKATRAMAN : Previously, we used to give four days' time. Now, to avoid all these delays, within four days, the Ministry passes on the information to the concerned people.

Indo-Russian Nuclear Deal

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*205. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA :

SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether any discussion took place with regard to sale of two nuclear reactor/weapons to India during the recent visit of External Affairs Minister to Russia;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Union Government have examined the Press Reports that US puts pressure on Russia on Indo-Russian Nuclear deal;

(d) whether Russia was to supply two nuclear reactors to India under the earlier Agreement;

(e) whether this subject was discussed between the Russian Prime Minister and the US authorities during the former's visit to United States;

(f) if so, whether there is any change in the attitude of Russia on this deal after the US visit of the Russian Prime Minister; and

(g) if so, by what time the deal is likely to be finalised?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (g) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Indo-Russian cooperation on setting up a nuclear power station in India was referred to by the Russian side during the visit of the Minister of External Affairs to the Russian Federation from 9-13 February, 1997.

Government have seen reports in the media indicating that the US has exerted pressure on Russia as regards the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project.

An Agreement was signed on 20 November, 1988 between India and the erstwhile USSR on "Cooperation in the construction of a Nuclear Power Station in India". By it the USSR was to cooperate in the construction and operation of a 2x1000 MW Nuclear Power Station in India.

Government does not have any information from either the Russian or US sides as to whether this subject was discussed during the visit of the Russian Prime Minister to the USA in February, 1997.

There has been no change in the Russian attitude towards the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project following the conclusion of the visit to the USA by the Russian Prime Minister.

Negotiations between India and Russia on the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project are yet to be completed.

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA : Sir, in the Statement, it is mentioned :

"An Agreement was signed on 20 November, 1988 between India and the erstwhile USSR on "Cooperation in the construction of a Nuclear Power Station in India". By it the USSR was to cooperate in the construction and operation of a 2x1000 MW Nuclear Power Station in India."

Now, we are in the year 1997.

At the end of the Statement, it is also mentioned :

"Negotiations between India and Russia on the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project are yet to be completed."

Already nine years have elapsed. India is short of power. In view of the urgency, may I know from the hon. Minister whether he had any discussions with them? What are the causes of the delay of nine years? When are then likely to complete these projects?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, it might sound cynical for him to say that nine years have elapsed. Out of those nine years, for five years, my hon. colleague was dealing with the subject.

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA : Sir, is this the answer?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : But the fact remains that the original Agreement was signed with the Soviet Union in 1988. Then, the Soviet Union collapsed. Therefore, the talks were again initiated when Mr. Yeltsin came here in 1993. From 1993 to 1995, different clauses were again examined. When I went to Moscow recently, the idea was reactivated. Now, we are discussing and negotiating with them various clauses regarding financial backing of this subject.

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA : Sir, while giving details of his visit to Moscow, he has stated Indo-Russian relations as partnership of strategic cooperation based on shared interests. May I know from the hon. Minister what is the strategic partnership and shared interest between the two countries?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : I have confined myself to this question under the strategic partnership. I am confining myself to this question to say that this is one of the very unique agreements which really does not bind the Russians by any law with a change subsequently internally or internationally. But there is a safeguard in our favour. At the moment, we have a DPR to be negotiated and the Cabinet, I think, would be examining this in the near future.

During my stay in Moscow, the First Deputy Prime Minister was very keen that this should go ahead. It is a very large project and is costing approximately about Rs. 14,000 crore. Therefore, naturally various dimensions have to be examined.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Sir, my question is of a little technical nature and could have been put to the Department of Atomic Energy. But it involves a policy matter also which has to be dealt with by the Foreign Ministry. So I am putting it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The erstwhile Soviet Union was willing to cooperate with India in developing fusion technology. My impression is, the present Russian Government is also willing to cooperate with India in developing fusion technology. The fusion technology is one of the most advanced technologies which can help any country to

generate power. Now, if the present Government in Russia is willing to cooperate with India to develop fusion technology, what would be the stand of the Indian Government on this point?

I was told that even the American scientists are working with the Russian scientists to develop this technology. They have three tocomarks-Tocomark I, Tocomark II and Tocomark III. They are using it to develop this technology. This depends on the attitude taken and the policy made by the two Governments more than the technology itself.

So, I would like to request the Minister of Foreign Affairs to respond, if he can and if he is willing to.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, it is not a question of willingness. It is a question of knowledge. Since I am not an expert on this subject, I do not have data available with me. But I assure the hon. Member that I take his point very seriously and I will check up on this point.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH : Mr. Speaker Sir, I would seek a clarification from the hon. Minister. Is it not correct that since 1988, the Cooperation Agreement has remained unimplemented because our Department of Atomic Energy did not find favour with the Agreement on the grounds of the fact that such an agreement of supply of nuclear power reactor or power supply to India will retard indigenous efforts by the Indian scientists and by our Department of Atomic Energy?

May I also know from the hon. Minister, has the proposed scheme, now re-energised, been fully discussed with the Department of Atomic Energy or is the earlier objection of the Department of Atomic Energy now no longer valid or is the question of indigenous efforts by our Department now completely placed on the shelf or is this a part of the overall effort of somehow revitalising 10,000 MW by 2000 AD?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, I might assure my hon. friend that the Department of Atomic Energy is fully involved in this. We have been told by that Department that this particular type of technology for setting up of such high capacity, that is, 1,000 MW, is not available with them.

As a matter of fact, our Department of Atomic Energy is very keen that we acquire this technology because they feel that this is a window of opportunity which was must utilise.

[Translation]

Funds for Removal of Illiteracy

*206. SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have decided to provide hundred per cent grant to educationally backward States like Bihar, Orissa and Rajasthan;